

Opinion

Steve Barnaby editor/477-5450

23352 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48024

Philip Power chairman of the board
Richard Aginlan president
Dick Isaham general manager
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Nick Sharkey managing editor
Fred Wright circulation director

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Stop bickering at council table

CIVIC LEADERS and their public conduct are the beacon of a community. When that beacon shines, the city stands proud. But when that light is dimmed, residents suffer.

Unfortunately, one of the weaknesses of local politics in Farmington Hills is the temptation by some leaders to make decisions on the basis of personal likes and dislikes.

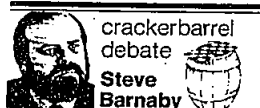
The squabbling between Mayor Charles Williams and Councilwoman Joan Dudley must stop.

It is one thing to debate openly the issues and to have philosophical differences about them. It is quite another to turn disagreement over public issues into personal animus.

The recent exchange between Dudley and Williams during the selection process of a council replacement at last week's meeting is just such an example of counterproductive conduct. Voters should keep tabs on this conduct and urge their city leaders to act in a more appropriate manner.

BETTER YET, council colleagues should call a halt to these outbursts.

A mayor, of all persons, just doesn't tell



a colleague to "shut up." Neither does a city's first citizen talk about going "into a back room and flip a coin or split a deck" to choose a replacement on a city council.

No matter how facetious the mayor may have been in making this remark, it certainly shows a lack of judgment to even suggest such action. Such statements only reinforce in residents' minds a negative stereotype of politicians which is undeserved by most who work to serve their communities.

The point has been made quite clear that Dudley and Williams don't get along. But they must look beyond their dislikes and work for the good of the city.

Farmington Hills has plenty of problems without these two bickering. Both of these council members have much to offer in dealing with this community's future.

Disagree if you must on policy. But let's keep it clean.



Welcome to fray

Welcome aboard, newly-appointed Farmington Hills Councilman Bob Anzlov.

After six years and two failed attempts, the Michigan Bell Telephone executive has made his way to the council table. We wish him success in his tenure as a council member.

Although our choice for council was someone other than Anzlov, we feel that his selection was a fair compromise between the factions which presently split the council.

Anzlov's views on issues are representative of many people in this community.

The process which the council went through to select Anzlov demonstrates that this city's legislative body is able to reach equitable compromise — an essential ingredient in running a town.

We also are glad to see that council resisted the temptation to close the debate and make its selection in the secrecy of the proverbial smoke-filled room. Some consideration was given to that possibility before the night of the candidate interviews.

The secret ballot would have been foolhardy. Openness always is the best policy in government. We look for its continued practice with this council.

Was 'racist' wolf coloring the news?

MOST DAYS I don't feel sorry for the big, rich papers downtown. Yet even rich guys deserve fair treatment, and last week they certainly got the short end from a report by three Ohio State University journalism school faculty members.

Because of the OSU people's built-in dispositions, it was a foregone conclusion the Detroit News and Free Press would wind up looking racist and, therefore, terrible in the eyes of right-thinking folks.

The 29-page OSU study, was commissioned by none other than Detroit Mayor Coleman A. Young, smarting from the coverage he got during the Magnum Oil overpayment case and Vista Disposal bribery case involving the sewage treatment plant.

THE J-SCHOOL trio began by assuming what they were setting out to prove:

"In a very real sense, the mayor of Detroit and the Detroit media serve different constituencies. The media seem never to have recognized that. The reporters talk about Detroit as a large metropolitan area spreading from the city center."

Coleman Young wasn't elected by those people. In the view of the mayor, the media represent an outside set of interests — interests which should be treated with suspicion.

"Given the social geography of the metropolitan area, there is a racist relationship between the media and the city," (Italics mine.)

In other words, before any reporter writes or broadcasts a word, we are told we have a "racist relationship." With such a rigged set of ground rules, reporters, editors and anchor people can't possibly win or break even. They are guilty by definition.

NOT ONLY is the mayor-media relationship "racist," but "news is by definition racist."

If news be the unusual, say the professors, then a black mayor is unusual, black contractors are unusual and as meeting where whites are unwelcome is unusual.



The sledding becomes doubly tough: a racist relationship between mayor and media, and news that is defined as racist — all before a word is written.

So it comes as no surprise that the professors find "clear instances of racist language" in the news columns of the Detroit papers.

WHEN THE faculty members' claim they "were successful in isolating ourselves from Young's influence," the rest of us must arch an eyebrow.

It is important to note — as one News-hating TV reporter failed to do — that the study wasn't commissioned by an outside agency like the chamber of commerce or Archdiocese of Detroit. It was hired by Young, who tends to meet problems with the cry of "racism."

Crying "racism" is an easy alibi. It saves you from dealing with the facts and issues at hand. Shouldn't the Detroit Department of Transportation be merged with SEMTA to form the comprehensive transit system we visualized back in 1968? Go 'way, redneck, that's racist. Shouldn't the people who pay for the Detroit water and sewerage system have a voice in its policies and operations? Bug off, you Grosse Pointe, that's racist.

One thinks of the shepherd boy in the Aesop fable who cried "wolf, wolf" so often that no one believed him. One day a real wolf came and ate the brave alive. A real wolf fragmented southeastern Michigan region needs some heavy discussion of governmental modernization and reform — not sociological claptrap which damns the message carrier in order to avoid dealing with the message.

Wrangling in state Senate

THE POWER shift in the state Senate from the Democrats to Republicans is complete with the naming of GOP members as committee chairs.

The Republican leadership announced that the reorganization of the Senate committees was done with the idea of improving the state's business climate and education system.

These are the same subjects which figure to be issues the GOP will use this year in its effort to convince voters to elect Republicans to state offices Nov. 6.

There is something of a warning in this. The Senate could become the forum for political wrangling of the highest order with the Republican leadership attempting at all times to limit the power and influence of Democratic Gov. James J. Blanchard's administration and the Democratic House of Representatives.

IT IS NOT lost on the Republican power structure that choosing to make last year's personal income tax increase a partisan issue led eventually to the recall of two Democratic state senators and the GOP's present enjoyment of power in the Senate.

The vote to increase the income tax from 4.6 to 6.35 percent was almost entirely partisan with only one Republican senator, Harry DeMaso of Battle Creek, helping give it a bare majority. Since then,



DeMaso has been treated like a leper. Although he is considered his party's leading taxation expert, he was bypassed for chair of the tax-writing Finance Committee and not even given a seat on it.

Republicans made political hay by making the tax hike the Blanchard-Democrat tax hike.

The danger is that the natural tendency on the part of Senate Republicans to keep a lid on all allocations and expenditures — thus retaining as much as possible of the tax-revolt constituency — may lead to political and governmental disorder.

Although the move to lower the state income tax, thereby mollifying a still unsettled populace, seems to have been put on the back burner, there are any number of GOP senators who would like to sponsor a tax-cutting proposal.

WHETHER A CUT is the wisest course of action at this point doesn't seem to matter as much as the political advantage

that would accrue to those in the forefront of any such maneuver.

Surely, this is behind Gov. Blanchard's recent proposal to lower the income tax three months ahead of schedule this year.

But even Blanchard's proposal to cut the tax rate by 0.25 percent Oct. 1 doesn't seem to be as much a clearly-thought-out plan to trim the budget in appropriate areas as a desperate maneuver to take the heat off the administration and those legislative Democrats who are still possible recall targets.

What is lacking in all the turmoil is a cogent, thoughtful approach to reducing the cost of state government.

MOST OF the Legislature's time is still spent discussing "program," proposals, benefits and legislation which will add layer upon layer of services and more cost to government.

Not enough time is given to determining how the state is going to continue to supply the services and funds that it has undertaken over the years.

Not enough thought is being given, for example — as it has been pointed out repeatedly — to some way to reduce the cost of the ever-rising Department of Social Services budget and to find ways of meeting the demands of an educational system which needs more money to improve its posture.

No antibiotic for this flu bug

COUGH, COUGH.

I've got this scratchy throat and congestion in my head. This is being written by a man fighting the flu.

Last week I watched as three members of my family were bedridden with the flu. I was proud that somehow I had dodged the bullet.

I made several trips to the hospital with family members as they received medical help. We found wall-to-wall people suffering from the same symptoms — fever, chills, congestion, coughing.

While at the hospital, I noticed that many doctors and nurses were coughing and sneezing.

Cough, Cough. What's going on?

THE WESTERN Wayne County area is suffering from a major outbreak of influenza, according to Dr. Don Lawrence, head of the Wayne County Health Department.

He identified it as the H1-N1 strain, commonly called the Brazilian strain. People who may be affected by this strain can be protected by a flu vaccine. This strain was prevalent a few years ago, so most older people have immunity to it.

"Many young persons are bothered by this flu because they have not received the vaccine," Lawrence said.



This strain contrasts with the H3-N2 or Philippine strain which was prevalent in this area last year. The flu vaccine was ineffective with H3-N2, and it seriously affected many senior citizens in nursing homes, Lawrence said.

Although some people die of flu every year, the bigger fear is that it will develop into Reye's Syndrome. Reye's is a mysterious illness which often causes death, especially among children. Seven cases have been reported in Michigan this year.

Typically, Reye's follows a long bout with the flu.

Dr. Carol Bird of the Oakland County Health Department said not much is known about the specific cause of Reye's. "There is a statistical correlation between the taking of aspirin during the flu and getting Reye's," Bird said.

HOW SEVERE is the flu outbreak as compared to other years?

County health authorities have no readily available statistics to compare one year to another.

Wayne County's Lawrence said "several" school districts in northern and downriver county areas have canceled classes because of the flu outbreak.

He would not identify the schools closed. "That's a decision for the school administration to make, not the county medical people," he said.

Oakland County's Bird said several schools had closed in that county also. "It was for a variety of reasons, not just a flu outbreak," she said.

Typically, schools are closed when 20 percent of the population is out sick.

Cough, Cough.

HOW IS IT treated? Unfortunately, there's no simple method. No antibiotic has been discovered for the H1-B1 strain or any other strain for that matter because they are viruses and impervious to antibiotics.

The usual advice — getting rest and drinking plenty of fluids — still applies. With this strain, bed rest can be for as long as two weeks, an unusually long time for the flu.

Cough, Cough. I've got to knock off now. I think I'll go home and get some rest.